

**WETHERSFIELD TOURISM COMMISSION**  
**Special Meeting: Tuesday December 30, 2008 at 5:30 p.m.**  
**Silas Robbins House, 185 Broad Street**  
**MINUTES**

**DRAFT FROM RECORDING SECRETARY**

**Review and/or edit needed where highlighted in yellow**

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Chair Charlie Forsdick.

**Roll Call/Attendance** (5 required for quorum):

Member Name	Present	Absent	Excused
Charlie Forsdick, Chair	✓		
Chris Traczyk, Vice Chair	✓		
Shireen Aforismo	✓		
Jenna Delay	✓		
Charles Ford			✓
Carol Hall	✓		
Dorcas McHugh			✓
Geraldine Munroe	✓		
Elaine St. Onge	✓		
Katie Sullivan	✓		

**Public Comments:** Ken Sokolowski, 79 Main St, was present at the meeting. He did not speak during the Public Comment section, but later asked to add some information about an event - see Events Calendar section under Reports.

**Minutes** of the **November 25, 2008** meeting –

Chairman Charlie Forsdick noted that one correction was requested for the draft minutes.

**Motion:** Elaine St. Onge motioned to approve the minutes as amended.

**Second:** Carol Hughes seconded the motion.

**Vote:** 8 - 0 - 0

Minutes approved as amended.

**Announcements/ Introductions:** None

**Reports:**

- **Central CT Culture & Tourism Commission** – Geraldine Munroe reported that she sent letters and an information packet to the members of the Town Council inviting them to a tourism strategic planning meeting on January 8<sup>th</sup>. She said that the Central Connecticut Culture & Tourism Commission is seeking input. She also noted that there was a recent article in the Hartford Courant in which the public was invited to provide input.
- **Economic Development and Improvement Commission** – Charlie Forsdick reported that the EDIC is starting a business visitation program for new businesses. He invited Commission members to go along and asked volunteers to contact Peter Gillespie.

Carol Hall said that she was disappointed that there has not been any follow-up on the opportunity to encourage movie-making in Wethersfield. She said it is a no-cost opportunity, only managing and organizing is needed. Charlie Forsdick encouraged her to bring it up again at another EDIC meeting. Chris Traczyk suggested that the issue be brought up again when a new town manager begins.

- **GHC&VB, Potential Events** - Carol Hall reported that one new convention has been scheduled that may be compatible with Wethersfield tourism: Stitches East. The convention will be held October 20 – 26, 2009, and 6,000 attendees are expected. Charlie Forsdick asked her to get contact information from Keith Voets. Chris Traczyk said that she would send out the e-mail introduction once she gets the contact information from Carol Hall.

Katie Sullivan said that the National Interpreter's Association is looking for places to go for its November 17 – 21, 2009 convention, and is considering Hartford. She said that a proposal has been made for the Webb Deane Stevens Museum to host a side-meeting. She said that she spoke with Peter Gillespie by phone about whether the trolley could be used to transport convention goers around town if they could get from Hartford to Wethersfield. Peter Gillespie said he believed that this would be an appropriate use of the trolley.

- **GHC&VB Hotel Summit** – Charlie Forsdick said that there is a meeting at which a travel research company will be making a presentation. He encouraged members to attend and take advantage of the member discount price. He said the presentation will review the results of a Hartford attractiveness study.
- **Grant Funding**
  - **Preserve America Master Plan** – Status: Chris Traczyk reported that there had been one steering committee meeting, but no substantive change in plans to date. The steering committee plans to continue meeting quarterly, mostly to prioritize tasks. She said that the signage committee is now together and plans to meet in early

January. She said that the task at hand is to mesh the original signage plan with what was approved in the grant. Then the signage design needs to be put out to bid.

- **Marketing Grant – Status:** Charlie Forsdick relayed from Peter Gillespie that there is no activity to report, as the stakeholders meeting was delayed until after the holidays. He said that Peter Gillespie is looking for help with drafting the request for proposal, due to the lack of time. Katie Sullivan said that she would see if the Webb Deane Stevens Museum had an example that could be followed. Chris Traczyk said that the goal is to hire a company to develop a cooperative marketing plan.
- **Wayfinding & Gateway signage:** Chris Traczyk reported that the next steps will be to combine these two tasks.
- **375<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee:** Chris Traczyk reported that there had been no meeting of this committee since the last Commission meeting. She relayed to Jenna Delay a request to resend the Tourism Commission logo. The idea is to include the 375<sup>th</sup> anniversary in advertising purchased by the Tourism Commission. Charlie Forsdick said that he is trying to get a previous Town consultant to turn over the art work done for the “witches ad”, so he can get the current Town consultant to update it with the 375<sup>th</sup> logo.
- **Budget Status, 2008 – 09:** Charlie Forsdick relayed from Peter Gillespie that there had been virtually no spending from the Tourism budget. Overall, he said that spending remains frozen, with all expenditures greater than \$10,000 **\$1,000** requiring Town Manager approval. Consequently, approval will be needed to purchase the advertising the Commission plans. Charlie Forsdick said that the usual purchase of 3 seasons in Journeys Magazine is the top priority in the Tourism budget, but it is uncertain whether it will be approved.
- **Event Calendar – Update:** Jenna Delay reported that the updated Tourism website is now up and running. She is looking for pictures of all businesses to place on the website. Charlie Forsdick suggested that the Old Wethersfield Shopkeepers may be a source for some pictures. Member of the public, Ken Sokolowski said that the Keene Foundation and the Fire Department are sponsoring a carnival October 18 – 20, 2009. Chris Traczyk suggested that the Keene Foundation get information to Jenna Delay for posting on the website.
- **Quarterly Report:** Charlie Forsdick said that the report for the fourth quarter of 2008 will be due in January. He said that only about 15% of the businesses are submitting data for the report. He said that all of the businesses have been reminded by telephone and e-mail. The next step is to get volunteers from the Commission to visit them in person. He said that this task could be the most important issue before the Commission at this time.

### **Old Business:**

- **Farmers Market – New event:** Jenna Delay reported that there had been a meeting earlier that day. It was decided that the lot they had planned to use is unsuitable because it gets too wet when it rains. The lot is on Silas Deane Highway, between Rite Aid Pharmacy and

Corpus Christi Church. She is now looking at alternative locations, including the Nature Center, the State Department of Motor Vehicles and Hanmer School. The market will likely operate on a Thursday between 2:00 and 6:00 PM, as that is when the vendors are available. She said that the vendors are those that would offer products that do not compete with Wethersfield farmers. They continue their plan to also have the market operate along with the Keeney Cooler Concerts. She also reported that the Health District has expressed a willingness to work with the committee. Health districts elsewhere have sometimes been an obstacle to getting farmer's markets established.

- **Visitor Survey – Quarterly report:** previously discussed under Reports
- **Stakeholder Meeting Schedule:** Chris Traczyk volunteered to work with Peter Gillespie on the meeting schedule.
- **Stakeholder List Expansion:** Charlie Forsdick said he would try to reinvigorate expansion by getting to the members a current list of stakeholder contacts. Charlie Forsdick reported that Bob Yandow of Bob's Vegetable Stand is considering joining The Commission as the Berlin Turnpike representative and asked the Commission to follow-up with him. Did Charlie mention he had a possibility for a BT rep?
- **Tourism DVD – Footage and still collection:** Geraldine Munroe said that there is nothing new to report, but she will call to follow-up.
- **Horse and Carriage Rides:** Charlie Forsdick said that he had nothing new on this item besides the previous budget discussion. Katie Sullivan suggested that the group discuss cancellation of the rides in bad weather, like snow. She has heard people express concern over the horses, and wonders if there are enough passengers to be worthwhile. She believes that the horses are fine, but has talked with the ride operators. They agree that the horses are fine, and that people still come out for the rides, even when it is snowing. Charlie Forsdick said that cancellation should be left to the operators, but this does highlight that someone is needed to monitor and communicate with the operator. Chris Traczyk said that the Tourism Commission does not have the authority to do so. Charlie Forsdick agreed it needed to be the Town, but he would try to find out if it could be delegated to the Commission. Katie Sullivan volunteered to be the liaison if someone from Tourism is needed.

### **New Business:**

- **Proposed Budget 2009-2010:** Charlie Forsdick distributed copies of a draft proposal for the 2009-2010 Tourism budget. He said that most of the items are either a continuation of items from last year, or items that were cut last year. One exception is a request for \$15,000 for the horse and carriage rides. He said this request is seed money hoping the State will add to it. It is otherwise feared that the State will not fund the rides at all. Charlie Forsdick said that the display advertising is one of the more expensive items in the budget. However, if a choice needed to be made between the display ads and the horse and carriage rides, he would recommend going with the advertising. He said that it would reach a wider audience and

continue and maintain the consistency that is critical to advertising. Charlie Forsdick said that the only other new spending item proposed is the talking map. He said he has found that talking maps are becoming popular. For example, the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism is using this technology. He said it would easily tie into the Tourism website.

**Motion:** Katie Sullivan motioned to approve the proposed budget as drafted, and the Journeys Magazine display advertising should be given first priority.

**Second:** Carol Hall seconded the motion.

**Vote:** 8 - 0 - 0

The proposed budget was approved.

- **Events – Cemetery Lantern Tour:** Katie Sullivan said that the Webb Deane Stevens Museum has decided not to sponsor the lantern tours, but will hold its “Spirits of Old Wethersfield” event again instead.
- **Talking Map:** previously discussed in the Budget item under New Business

#### **Follow Up Items:**

- **Photo Library:** All of the members said they had not heard from the person doing the cataloging.
- **Quarterly Report Response – Stakeholders:** previously discussed under Reports
- **Contact and Task Lists:** Charlie Forsdick distributed copies of the following as reference material for the members:
  - Contact lists for the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism and the Greater Hartford Convention and Visitors Bureau. He said that the members should keep in mind that each of these entities has a different mission. The CCT&T is focused on individuals, and the GHC&VB is focused on groups / conventions.
  - Upcoming Task List – to serve as reminder for things the Commission has set out to do

#### **Correspondence:**

- **British Car Show:** Shireen Aforismo said that she had been approached by a friend that belongs to a British car club, and is interested in holding car shows in Wethersfield. Charlie Forsdick said he would call Steve Holtz and Kathy Bagley to explore the idea.

- **Meetings Magazine:** Geraldine Munroe reported that a very nice article called Hartford Heights recently appeared in this magazine. Charlie Forsdick asked her to contact the editor of the magazine to see about getting an article in about Wethersfield.
- **Position Statement on the Preserve America Recommendations:** Charlie Forsdick distributed copies of an e-mail he sent to Rae Anne Palmer in which he expressed his opposition to the recommendation that the Tourism Commission be absorbed into a Heritage Commission. He said that expansion would be good to enable more to get done, especially for the Master Plan. However, he said a Heritage Commission would be focused on the historic district, and not represent the whole town like the Tourism Commission does. Chris Traczyk expressed concern that the statement was written in a way that conveyed he was speaking for all of the Commission members, but none of them had a chance to review it. Charlie Forsdick said he did not expect all of the members to agree with his position, and he would clarify that he was not speaking for all of the members.

**Next Meeting Date:** January 27, 2009 - 5:30 PM – Town Manager’s Conference Room.

**Call to Adjourn:** Katie Sullivan motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:03 p.m., Chris Traczyk seconded the motion, and the vote showed all members in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kevin T. Sullivan  
Commission Recording Secretary